

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

1. (currently amended) A method for franking and processing deliveries, ~~characterized by the following method steps~~comprising the steps of:

- ~~transmitting information from a dispatch customer transmits to a dispatch service, the information concerning comprising anticipated deliveries including the respective recipient details to the dispatch service and~~ means for triggers triggering a process for the payment of the postal charges,
- ~~generating a franking number by the dispatch service, after acceptance of the charge payment process, the dispatch service generates a franking number for each reported delivery and stores it with the provided recipient details in a searchable franking database, the the franking number comprising a select number of digits of the franking number being selected such that each delivery which occurs per recipient is provided with a separate franking number for a specific period of time, and storing the franking number with recipient details in a database,~~
- ~~transferring, for each reported delivery, the franking number from the dispatch service transfers the franking number to the dispatch customer for each reported delivery,~~
- ~~applying the franking number to a delivery such that the number is in human readable form, the franking number being applied by the dispatch customer, the dispatch customer applies the franking number to the associated delivery in such a way that it can be recognized as such, is uncoded and can be read by a person,~~

- ~~reading the delivery labels of the deliveries which are submitted to the dispatch service by the dispatch customer are read;~~
 - ~~determining and reading recipient address;~~
 - ~~searching the franking database for a record corresponding with the delivery labels and recipient address after the recipient address has been determined and read and a franking number has been applied, the franking database is searched to determine whether a corresponding entry is present;~~
 - ~~if the record is found, further processing the delivery and indicating an invalid status of the record in the database; and~~
 - ~~if no record is found, rejecting the delivery after a corresponding valid entry is determined in the franking database, the delivery is further processed and the entry in the franking database is marked as invalid immediately, or at the latest after its registration in the last distribution station; and if no corresponding entry is found in the franking database, the delivery is rejected.~~
2. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that, further comprising the step of, after the record is located in the database, a corresponding valid entry is determined in the franking database by the dispatch service~~ a machine-readable code - permitting automatic distribution - is applied to the delivery.
3. (currently amended) The method as ~~claimed in~~ accordance with claim 2, ~~wherein the machine-readable code comprises~~ characterized in that a barcode, ~~which characterizes the valid recipient address is applied as a machine-readable code.~~
4. (currently amended) The method as ~~claimed in~~ accordance with claim 3, ~~further comprising the steps of determining whether a recipient address is valid by checking, at the dispatch service, characterized in that, in order to determine the valid recipient~~

address; the dispatch service checks whether there is a forwarding facility for the recipient and if there is, the forwarding address is coded as a valid address.

5. (currently amended) The method ~~as claimed in~~according to claim 1, further comprising the step of informing the dispatch customer, by the dispatch service ~~characterized in that the dispatch service informs the dispatch customer of~~ reformatting, necessary for reliable OCR reading, of the recipient address which is to be applied to the delivery.

6. (currently amended) The method ~~as claimed in~~according to claim 1, further comprising the step of informing the dispatch customer, by the dispatch service, ~~characterized in that the dispatch service informs the dispatch customer of~~ a recipient address which has changed owing to a forwarding facility of the recipient and which is to be applied to the delivery.

7. (currently amended) The method ~~as claimed in~~according to claim 1, characterized in that wherein the franking number on the delivery is ~~characterized by~~comprises one or more additional characters which may easily be identified.

8. (currently amended) The method ~~as claimed in~~according to claim 1, characterized in that wherein the franking number is ~~characterized by~~comprises a defined position on the delivery.

9. (currently amended) The method ~~as claimed in~~according to claim 1, further comprising the step of applying ~~characterized in that an additional character for characterizing this franking with the franking number is applied to the~~ a location of on the delivery which is provided for stamps.

10. (currently amended) The method ~~as claimed in~~according to claim 1, further comprising the step of entering into a record ~~characterized in that the~~ a level of the charges paid is entered for each delivery... ~~in the franking database.~~

11. (currently amended) The method ~~as claimed in~~according to claim 10, further comprising the steps of determining, at the dispatch service, characterized in that the dispatch service determines the properties of the deliveries which influence charges and checking whether the charges paid correspond to the charges to be paid, and when the charges paid are too low, demanding top-up payments are demanded from the dispatch customers or the recipients.

12. (currently amended) The method ~~as claimed in~~according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the coded, valid recipient address and the franking number are used together for identifying the a respective delivery within the framework of tracking transportation and monitoring distribution.

13. (new) The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of indicating an invalid record in the database is performed after the delivery has been received at a final destination station.